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SEMI-CENTENNIAL DISCOURSE

BEFORE THE

Massachusetts Home Missionary Society,

MAY 29, 1849.

BY RICHARD S. STORRS, D. D.

Man's Duty, in Relation to the Lord's Work.

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MASSACHUSETTS HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY,

IN BOSTON, MAY 29, 1849.

BY RICHARD S. STORRS, D. D.,
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DISCOURSE.

ACTS IX. 6.

LORD, WHAT WILT THOU HAVE ME TO DO?

THE conversion of Saul of Tarsus, whether we regard its attendant circumstances, or its immediate and remote effects on the course of the church and the world, is an event of surpassing interest. Jealous of the honor of his ancestral religion, breathing out threatening and slaughter, and hurrying on to scenes of anticipated triumph over the defenceless disciples of Jesus, he is suddenly arrested by a brilliant light from heaven, and an unearthly voice of tender remonstrance. Overwhelmed by the vision, he falls to the earth. The power of the Highest subdues and transforms him. His spiritual eye enlightened, and his heart changed, his life takes a new direction; the church rejoices in a fresh auxiliary to her works of faith and labors of love; and the wide world thenceforth becomes the object of his solicitude, and the theatre of his hallowed toils and conflicts.

The elements of this great event enter into every instance of conversion over which the angels of heaven rejoice. It has God for its author, truth for its instrument, and the turning of the strong current of man's thoughts, emotions and movements from the carnal to the spiritual, for its effect.

"Trembling and astonished," Paul's heart prompts the inquiry, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" thus revealing the first convictions and resolves of every renovated man; it is the spontaneous and uniform expression of piety, whether new born or matured. We are now concerned, however, only with a single topic of instruction, suggested by the text, viz:

GOD HAS A WORK TO BE DONE BY MAN.

Powerless and dependent as we are, unable to retain our lives or direct our steps by wisdom of our own, it is an undeserved honor to be admitted into the field of God's highest labors, and made sharers of the toils involved in securing the noblest ends of an intelligent existence.

Whatever God would accomplish in this world, he might clearly bring to pass, by that simple energy of Will, that speaks, and it is done—or, commands, and it stands fast. Had it been God's pleasure, who dare say, that man might not have lived without carefulness—the fields supplying him food, the skies dropping honey as the dew, the fowls of the air, the fish of the sea, and every living thing contributing to his comfort, leaving no demand to be enforced on his physical energies, nor the *ennui* of the sluggard to be relieved by unfitting indulgence? So, in the arrangements of the moral world, who dare say, that man might not have been exempted from the necessity of ceaseless intellectual and spiritual discipline, of untiring resistance to the downward tendencies of society, and constant effort to elevate the world to its destined condition of purity and love? If we look to the power of God alone, all this is obviously possible. But Infinite Wisdom has determined, after having incorporated the indestructible elements of activity in man's constitution, that they have scope for their development; that he be placed in circumstances where happiness and labor are identified; where all the faculties gather

strength by judicious exercise; and where assimilation to God is proportioned to the constancy of active obedience.

That God has a work for man to do in his relations to the material world, will not however be questioned. The indications of the fact are clear in his entire physical organization; every bone, muscle and tendon of his frame declare him to be made for activity; and his earliest developed propensities demonstrate the same truth, no less than the pressing necessities of his nature, and the testimony of universal experience to the connection between happiness and well regulated action.

Nor are the indications less clear, that God has work for man to do in the *moral* world. The mind never sleeps. Its repose is found in action. Whether it receive impressions or produce them, it feels and acts agreeably to the necessity of its nature; and these impressions correspond in character with the action of the law written on the heart. If that law operate according to its original design, the whole course of life will be marked by beneficence—and love, order, peace and joy will prevail against their antagonistic principles; but if its original design be perverted, and the law in the members triumph, confusion and tears will permeate the whole sweep of its authority.

The great work that God has for man to do, is none other than that begun by Christ, in pursuance of the gracious counsels of eternity. So far as it relates to the magnifying of the law by the shedding of blood, it is already accomplished. In the fearful scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary was the foundation laid for the sinner's restoration to his Maker's favor, by the vindication of Jehovah's truth, and of the majesty and perfectness of his law. Here, God in Christ acted alone, "and of the people there was none with him." But the living structure destined to rise on this foundation, demands human workmanship in connection with the divine; the lively stones composing the spiritual house, are not hewn and

brought to their places without man's instrumentality; the world is not to be recovered from sin's dominion, nor the hold of the fallen angel on the race to be broken, nor the clouds of gloomy darkness to be rolled away, and the true Light to be comprehended, without the sustained activities of regenerated humanity. Spiritual ignorance is every where settled and profound. Men know not God as they ought to know him, nor the extent and spirituality of his law; they know not even themselves, nor the principles that control their conduct; they know not Christ, nor apprehend the grand design of his mission to the world; they know not the Holy Spirit, nor receive his reproofs of sin, of righteousness and judgment; they understand not their duties one to another as subjects of a common guilt, and heirs of a common destiny; and, of heaven, the habitation of the pure in heart, as of hell, the eternal home of the wicked, they have no definite conceptions. And, upon these subjects, knowledge is to be diffused;—the Bible is to be sent abroad on the wings of every wind; its doctrines and precepts are to be expounded and fast bound on the conscience; the gospel is to be proclaimed in all its fulness and glory; its paramount authority is to be urged, and its spirit exemplified, while its rewards and punishments are to be displayed in all the vividness and force appropriate to eternal verities; the life giving influences of the Holy Spirit also are to be secured by prayer, with corresponding activity in preparing the hearts of men to receive them. The teachings of the gospel, inefficient in themselves, are mighty only through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, and casting down lofty imaginations; "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts," is the heart subdued, and the eye turned away from earth to heaven.

The work given man to do, demands faith in God, as the author of every good and perfect gift. Believing, man can do all things; unbelieving, he can do nothing. It demands self-denial, or, the sacrifice of ease and gain—

the doing with all the might, whatsoever the hands find to do, to persuade men to be reconciled to God. It demands practical wisdom; we are to become all things to all men, that their prejudices may be obviated, their passions quelled, and their attention gained; and then, every appliance of argument and motive is to be discreetly made. It demands patience and perseverance too; for ignorance is not to be banished, nor perverseness conquered, nor the regeneration of the individual or the community effected, in a day.

The field of these labors is the WORLD. Divide it as you will, and rear the walls of separation between the nations high as heaven; let configuration and color, social customs and education, language and religion, hereditary strifes and belligerent dispositions interpose as many barriers between them as the bitterest foe of human equality can desire, yet, as by heaven's ordinance all men are brethren, so by Christ's command, all are to be evangelized. Nor are there wanting on record facts innumerable demonstrative of the power of the Gospel to break the stout heart of the savage warrior, dispel the darkmindedness of the stubborn idolater, constrain the infidel to hang his hopes on the cross, and subdue the wildest sons of profligacy to the obedience of the faith. The labor demanded therefore is practicable. The end contemplated is attainable.

It is not to be attained however suddenly, by isolated or even united effort. As no possible combination of the energies of man can at once bring every mountain low and exalt every valley, or create lines of communication spanning the earth, and connecting every country, city and hamlet by iron bands; yet as mountains are giving way and valleys rising, and communications are passing with lightning speed from land to land, and intelligence extending beyond all the conceptions of other years, by the application of newly awaked intellectual energies to the eternal principles of science; and as the pickaxe and

the spade, the drill and the lever, the wheel and the steam in the hands of persevering industry, are tearing down the Alps and the Andes, and circumambulating the world with the precision of the diurnal sun;—so the idolatries and superstitions of the nations, though too deeply imbedded in the corruptions of fallen nature, and of too mountainous height and strength to be swept away at once by any conceivable combination of the moral forces of Christendom, yet "by little and little" may they be subdued and extirpated, as were the Hivite and Canaanite and Hittite of old. If faithful laborers are employed, and furnished with appropriate instruments of operation, and if time be allowed them, and the electric wires of fraternal love and high resolve connect all hearts and hands devoted to Christ and his church, then shall the cloud-capt towers and gorgeous palaces of Pope and Pagan be overturned, and the way cleared for the triumphant march of pure and undefiled religion over the entire moral world. But, as in subduing the elements of nature to human purposes, and levelling the inequalities of the earth's surface, and preparing the way for the freest intercommunication between the several kindreds of the earth, there are various processes to be carried out, and instruments to be used—as the labor involved must be divided into distinct departments, and each department supplied with laborers of appropriate qualifications; so in the conquest of the world to the authority of Jesus, and in the diffusion of the light and love which are to bind all nations in a common brotherhood, a corresponding division of labor and diversity of laborers is demanded. And for this Heaven has made provision in the distribution of its gifts throughout the church, giving to one, as in apostolic days, the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another faith, to another the discerning of spirits, to another divers kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. The principle of adaptation, so visible every where in the material creation, is main-

tained with equal force and clearness throughout the moral world. As the husbandman and the mechanic, the professional man and the merchant, the ship builder and the mariner, in their different departments of labor, each contribute according to their industry and skill to the attainment of the great end proposed by human enterprise and toil—the amelioration of each other's condition, and the increase of the comforts of the great family of man; so the minister at the altar and the subordinate officer of the church, the theological professor and the Sabbath school teacher, the author of the tract and its distributer, the evangelist at home and the foreign missionary, have each their distinct spheres of action, to be occupied with mutual benefit and a common success, proportioned to the humility and zeal with which their respective duties are performed. The comparative importance of one department or another is scarce a subject of pertinent inquiry; all of them are marked out in the economy of Providence with like reference to one grand result; and if filled with faithful laborers, that result will be secured—souls will be saved from death, the earth will be blessed, and God will be glorified.

Thus are we instructed, that to make our influence felt over the world, and accomplish what the Lord would have us do, it is not necessary that we individually traverse and explore each continent and isle of the sea, nor that we become familiar with all languages, and fix the eye with equal directness and intensity on all the various tribes of men. Providence assigns us a field of labor to which our circumstances, abilities and dispositions adapt us, without foreclosing other fields, by such an assignment, against those whose capabilities and desires qualify them for their occupancy. If Paul go to the Gentiles, and Peter remain with the circumcision; if Edwards labor at Northampton, Stockbridge or Princeton, and Brainerd station himself at Kaunameek; if Dwight and Griffin trim the midnight lamp for the education of the

greater lights of our country, or the edification of our largest churches, and lay their bones in the land of their fathers; so with equal propriety and acceptance Fisk and Parsons explore the desolations of Palestine; Hall and Newell expend their strength on the shores of India; Mills and Ashmun consecrate their energies to the redemption of Africa; and Munson and Lyman lay down their lives in answering calls from the islands of the sea, for emancipation from bloody thraldom. The inquiry, "Lord! what wilt thou have me to do?" is thus answered by the Providence that assigns the field and the species of labor to one and another, in correspondence with their tastes, habits of mental discipline, physical and moral developments, and the "necessity laid upon them."

As to the comparative claims of Home and Foreign missions, it may be said confidently, that they admit of settlement by no rules of man's arithmetic. The imprimatur of heaven is on them both. They are "twins, tied by nature." Each demands the whole-souled support of every friend of Christ. If churches at home languish, missions abroad pine away. If desolations increase here, and thorns of the wilderness spring up in the once blooming garden of the Lord, never will the fragrance of the Rose of Sharon be diffused over the world's wide wilderness. So thought our fathers. So let their children think, and act accordingly.

On the twenty-eighth day of May, 1799, a few friends of Christ from the central and eastern counties of the Commonwealth, assembled by previous agreement in this city of our solemnities, for the organization of a Missionary Society, on the same scriptural principles that have formed the basis of every evangelical association for the world's conversion since Christ went home to heaven. Among them were the honored names of Emmons, Austin, Simpkins, Sanford, Hopkins, Weld, Spring, Barker, Niles, Crane and Strong, who were selected from their

compeers to bear the responsibility of carrying out the purpose deliberately formed; of "diffusing the knowledge of the gospel among the heathens as well as other people, in the remote parts of our country, where Christ is seldom or never preached." And, to this movement were they led by the response of Heaven to their prayer, "Lord! what wilt thou have us to do?"

Five years later, when increasing familiarity with the spiritual wants of the world had expanded their views, they so amended the article of the constitution just recited, as to make it embrace the whole family of man. "To diffuse the gospel among the people of the newly settled and remote parts of our country, among the Indians of the country, and through the more distant regions of the earth, as circumstances shall invite, and the ability of the Society shall admit," became thenceforward their all-comprehensive object. Neither a nobler nor a more single one ever presented itself to the human mind. It is large and indivisible as the great command of the ascending Redeemer. Embracing at once the home and foreign fields as equally the Lord's and alike cursed by the usurpations of Satan, and calling for deliverance in tones of unutterable agony—they contemplated nothing less than the moral emancipation of the World, and the shivering of the dark sceptre under which it had "groaned and travailed in pain," for almost six thousand years. Their efforts, it is true, were feeble, and their immediate success small; but their reach of mind commands admiration, and their perseverance amid untold discouragements proves their hearts to have been attempered amid the fires that glow on heaven's altars. To them, the Saviour's life of toil and death of woe illustrated the magnitude and value of the work; the labors and sufferings of Apostles threw around it a quenchless glory; the priceless worth of the gem of immortality concealed in every bosom—its rescue from destruction in the persons of uncounted millions—the redemption of the ground from its entailed curse, and the

ineffable splendors of heaven, overspreading eternal ages of blissful occupation—all opened on the eye of their faith the unsearchable riches garnered up in the results of the work the Lord gave them to do—a work as fresh and glorious in the hands of apostles of the nineteenth century as in those of the first.

I have alluded to the feebleness of their early efforts, and the embarrassments that crowded the incipient stages of their enterprise. And this will be understood, by allusion to the fact that during the first year of the organization, one thousand forty-five dollars and eight cents only, were received into their treasury; and, that no man could be persuaded to enter the missionary field, though appointments were made, and pressed with much entreaty. The second year added but about two hundred dollars to the funds, though four missionaries were obtained;—one of them for three months, to labor in Vermont, another for several months in Maine, and the others ten months each, in "the new settlements, between Whitestown and the Genesee river, and among the neighboring tribes of Indians." It was a day of small things; but still it was the birth-day of a system of operations, which now carries joy and gladness into ten thousand habitations of our own land, and makes known the wonderful works of the Lord far and wide throughout the world. I speak advisedly. Wherever were the birth-place of Foreign Missions, and whatever their aliment in their infancy, they were dandled on the knees of the Massachusetts and Connecticut Missionary Societies while they themselves were yet feeble. The Directors and executive officers of "the Board" were chosen from among those whose wisdom and experience had ripened into maturity under the teachings of the Home Missionary spirit; its plans and movements were devised by those who, like Worcester and Evarts, had taken their lessons in the Home Missionary school; and its successful labors have been accomplished by men whose earliest philanthropic emotions were in-

spired by the genius of Home Missions. In this we rejoice as Heaven's arrangement, and the seal of its approbation; and, "as the truth of Christ is in us, no man shall stop us of this boasting in all the regions of Achaia." But with this branch of the Society's early operations in reference to "the Indians of the country and the more distant parts of the earth," we are no farther concerned, since its separation from the parent stock in 1810, and its able management by "the American Board."

Till 1827, the Society struggled for enlargement, and scattered its laborers, sparsely indeed, from Maine to Louisiana, aiming to execute its commission faithfully "among the people of the newly settled and remote parts of our country." The correctness of its policy may fairly be questioned, while the largeness of its desires cannot be too earnestly emulated. Its aims were high, but its energies were crippled by the scantiness of its resources. A little more than fifty thousand dollars, making an average of eighteen hundred per annum, formed the total amount of its receipts during the first twenty-eight years of its existence, exclusive of small donations of Bibles and tracts committed to its missionaries by liberal friends, for gratuitous distribution. During this period, however, experience taught knowledge, the spirit of piety increased, the tokens of future accomplishment multiplied, and the foundations of ultimate success were deeply and broadly laid.

While the Society's charter allowed free course to its movements in all other parts of the land, Massachusetts herself seemed to be regarded as a palace of silver built on a wall, and inclosed with boards of cedar, liable to no decay, requiring no repairs, rich in heavenly treasures, and consequently shut out from the reach of the beneficence that scattered the blessings of the gospel broadcast over "the remote parts of our country." An investigation of facts, however, revealed the mistake. From various causes, some churches had become extinct, others were enfeebled to a

degree that rendered their continued existence doubtful, and others still were violently assailed by the adversary who spread out his hand on all their pleasant things, and the area of wasteness and desolation was found to be rapidly extending. This state of things demanded attention. The eye affected the heart, because of the daughters of Zion. And in 1818, the General Association of the State resolved on the organization of the Domestic Missionary Society of Massachusetts, and appointed a Board of Directors, whose labors and successes in raising up fallen churches, strengthening the feeble, relieving the oppressed, and furnishing means of grace to the destitute, admit not of recital here. But after fulfilling its commission for nine years, without being known in law, and with no other funds than the freewill offerings of the people, but with highly gratifying results, it became united with the Society whose semi-centennial we celebrate to-night, in consequence of a change effected in its charter, authorizing and empowering it to employ its funds in Massachusetts or elsewhere, at its discretion. This union long desired, was thus happily consummated.

In the mean time, the American Home Missionary Society had risen into life, as the offspring of that wisdom which is from above, the representative of the Home Missionary spirit of the whole land, and the heaven-ordained agent of accomplishing a stupendous moral revolution in the religious aspects of the country. Its felicitous organization in 1826, its central position, catholic principles and promised efficiency, at once secured confidence. The necessity of such a bond of union as its constitution offered, between the scattered elements of Home evangelization—a necessity arising from our rapidly expanding population, with its heterogeneousness of character, and strong tendencies to unbelief and viciousness, had become extensively felt. As was natural, and even indispensable to the carrying out of the original designs of the Massachusetts Missionary Society, an auxiliary re-

lation was established between them without delay, which has hitherto been maintained, with ever-increasing harmony of sentiment, and mutual advantage.

It is hardly possible to do less, and quite needless to attempt more on an occasion like this, than to "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance." The enterprise in which we are engaged is not new. The principles on which it rests, are familiar. The spirit that crowns it with success is not a stranger to your hearts; and it is only the cumulative argument, impelling to re-invigorated action, that need be urged. And even this is so often presented, in such variety of phase, and with such cogency of appeal, as well nigh to discourage all attempted utterance of the heart's convictions, that our country, if saved at all, must be saved by the gospel's power. Let me say, however,—

It is a grand moral achievement that is contemplated by Home Missionary Associations—nothing less than the spiritual regeneration of the whole land. Value as we may, intellectual enlightenment, purity of morals, refinement of manners, the peace of neighborhoods, the success of agriculture, manufactures, commerce, or the mechanic arts,—the maintenance of our civil institutions, —the perpetuity of immunities handed down to us from our fathers, and our defences against foreign aggression; —yet all are but the small dust of the balance in comparison with the renewal of the mind in the image of God, and the possession of an incorruptible inheritance in the heavens;—a renewal effected only by God's truth in the hand of the Spirit, and forming the basis of all that is lovely and of good report in each relationship of life, as well as of peace in death, and glory beyond the grave.

1. Through God's favor we have a pleasant land, of whose extent and capabilities no mind but faintly conceives. Exclusive of the late acquisitions from Mexico, the area of the United States admits of division into 376

States as large as Massachusetts ; and, including the territories ceded by Mexico, the number of such States rises to 448.* Three millions two hundred and fifty thousand square miles form a broader field than twenty-six kingdoms like Great Britain would cover, and is exceeded only in 500,000 square miles, by all Europe, embracing three empires, sixteen kingdoms, and more than forty other independent states. And it has been said, less accurately, perhaps, than elegantly, that "plains here open to our view as boundless as the ocean ; mountains that look down upon the clouds ; slopes that cover thousands of miles in extent, and rivers co-extensive. Nature paints on her largest scale ; all her figures are colossal ; all her features bold and strongly marked." If perchance, loftier mountains, broader streams, or more extensive plains be found elsewhere, there are yet none richer in their productions, more accommodating to the demands of commercial enterprise, nor more abundant in their returns to the hand of industry. Its mineral, vegetable and animal resources are proved exhaustless, by the developments of advancing years. Its ten thousand miles of continuous coal field, its iron mountains, and newly discovered mines of lead and copper, of silver and gold ; its numberless lakes and rivers ; its verdant hill tops, fruitful vallies and beautiful prairies rolling like the sea, baffle description, while they indicate the purpose of high Heaven to make it forever the glory of all lands. That ancient land whose "brooks of water, fountains and depths springing out of vallies and hills," are celebrated in inspired song—"a land of wheat and barley, and vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of oil olive and honey—whose stones were iron, and out of whose hills brass was dug"—was rich indeed, salubrious, and blessed of Heaven ; but our own country is richer still, as healthful too, sharing more largely in all that ministers to human welfare.

* See Twelfth Annual Report of Hon. H. Mann to the Board of Education, page 33.

2. Already a population of more than twenty millions spreads itself over this broad land. The Anglo-Saxon race, elevated and vitalized by the influences of a pure Christianity, forms the substratum of the wonderful combination, into which enters in various proportions the imperturbable spirit of the Dutchman, the vivaciousness of the Frenchman, the pride of the Castilian, the hardiness of the Norwegian, and the perseverance of the German. All nations have their representatives among us. And it is more than possible, that after the inevitable effervescing process of these discordant elements shall have passed, the singular compound will receive a deeper impress of whatever is noble in human character than has yet been made on any nation under heaven; it may be confidently anticipated indeed, if faith shall work by love, and pour into the fused mass a copious mixture of the Apostolic spirit.

3. The unexampled rapidity with which this population increases—in the ratio of three per cent, or eight hundred thousand souls a year—unless it shall be interrupted by unforeseen interpositions of Providence, will give to the country within a hundred years, a larger population than China boasts, and double the amount of that of Europe; nor in this fact is there anything to excite apprehension, if the knowledge of the Lord shall keep pace with the advancing numbers of the people; for then will there be ever increasing harmony of sentiment and warmth of patriotic emotion, combined with earnestness of effort to extend the blessings of civilized and intellectual life over the broad expanse of the nations. But the mass of ignorance that now exists and accumulates from year to year, through the addition of five hundred thousand foreign immigrants, is not to be removed nor even neutralized in its influence on succeeding generations, apart from systematic and persevering missionary effort.

4. We claim to be a Christian nation; and the claim is just, in so far as dissent from the faith of Jews, Moham-

medans, and Pagans confirms it. The Bible is among us, as a commonly recognized revelation from heaven. The Sabbath to some extent is honored. The sanctuary opens its doors to them that fear God; and an efficient ministry commands respect extensively and holds the evil tendencies of society in abeyance. Still, infidelity occupies high places, and diffuses itself far and wide. Godlessness abounds. Vice forgets to blush. Crime escapes unpunished. Oppression and violence triumph over the weakness of humanity. Principles of licentiousness take root, and bring forth luxuriantly the grapes of Sodom and the clusters of Gomorrah. Even religion itself is wounded in the house of its friends; and, betrayed into the hands of its enemies, or else clothed in the attire of an harlot, is employed by the great seducer to bind over multitudes to destruction.

But of the varieties of religious faith, and observance, and of the feuds of rival sects, I need only say, that as the legitimate offspring of combined imbecility and corruption, they will vanish before the advancing light of the Sun of righteousness, as offensive reptiles and beasts of prey disappear before the manly enterprise that converts their hiding-places into blooming fields and cultivated gardens. Formalism may assert its title to the heavenly inheritance, but meek spirituality successfully confronts it. Fanaticism may boast of new revelations and of intercourse with disembodied spirits, but an intelligent and whole-souled piety confounds it. Rationalism claims a higher divinity than it allows to the Word of God, but cowers in the presence of the unsophisticated faith that "knows the Bible true, and knows no more." Romanism, dark-minded, jesuitical and destructive in all its bearings on civil and religious liberty, may arrogate the honors that belong to God alone, but in the evangelism that pervades the Protestant community, it finds an invincible antagonist. So happily has Heaven adjusted the checks and balances of truth and error, that we have nothing to fear from the

prevalence of the latter, if we fall not from our steadfastness in maintaining the former.

The world is a wide battle-field of conflicting principles and opinions. In far the largest part of it, a servile subjection to hierarchical establishments and traditionary records is gloried in. Freedom of thought and independence of judgment are unknown. The mind quietly submits to vassalage. Ignorance is the mother of idolatrous and superstitious worship, and corruption is its father. Largeness of mind, purity of heart, and integrity of conduct are sacrificed to the lusts of the flesh, and the baser passions of the moral nature. But nowhere is the field of conflict so clear, nor an active contest so warmly waged, or so promising in its issue, as in our own country; for no consolidated superstitions are here—no ecclesiastical establishments frown defiance on the spirit of open inquiry; no powerful priesthood throws into prison the offending preacher of God's truth, nor maintains the right of dictating terms of admission to the privileges of citizenship and offices of State; nor does any civil power interfere with the rights of conscience, and impose "pains and penalties" for non-adherence to prescribed forms of faith; but every man worships when and where he chooses, or *nowhere* if he dare, and adopts and defends opinions, under responsibilities to none but Jehovah! And if, as a consequence of this unrestricted liberty, repulsive errors come in like a flood, and proselytism run rampant, and "confusion worse confounded" temporarily prevail, so that "truth falls in the streets, and equity cannot enter"—yet have we nothing to fear, while the field of argument is open to all, and while with spiritual weapons in our hands, we faithfully follow the leadership of the Lord, mighty in battle. Truth is mightier than the mightiest, as God is higher than the highest among the children of men. Further,

5. True it is, that the moral desolations of the land are wide and appalling, and thousands of communities, and

millions of individuals are groping their way in darkness, to the judgment seat of Christ. And it is clear that these moral wastes are most numerous in portions of the country, where the foundations of society are not yet laid in just and commonly understood principles, and cemented by mutual acquaintance and love;—where the forest slowly yields to the woodman's axe, and the plow-share is driven with difficulty through soil undisturbed for centuries, except by the tramp of the buffalo, and the swift-footed hunter. Physical wants there press heavily; every energy is tasked for the supply of food and raiment; and the cravings of the intellectual and moral nature for appropriate aliment are unheeded. Error and dissipation too, are widely triumphant amid these scenes of desolation. The arm of civil authority is weak, and imposes few restraints. Educational influences, however strong in the happier circumstances of childhood, operate but feebly on neglected manhood. The sound of the church-going bell is rarely heard; the solemn assembly is forsaken; and the Sabbath, stripped of its sacredness, is devoted to recreation or vicious indulgence. Even where the institutions of religion languish in happy New England, the bands of social order break asunder, the youth grow up to ignorance, the spirit of honorable enterprise fails, and hard griping avarice, or low-lived cunning, and filthy pleasures absorb the mind's wakefulness, uprooting honest industry, banishing domestic confidence, and laying open the whole community to the ingress of the foulest spirits of the pit; but, far more broadly true is this of other sections of the country, where religious institutions have never yet laid strong hold on the public mind—where thousands on thousands of children and youth are untaught the first rudiments of human and divine knowledge, where half the adult population cannot read the oracles of God, and nine-tenths of the remaining half prefer the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge! Caterers to sensuality are never wanting there; preachers of

another gospel than that which Paul proclaimed, are ever at hand to do their master's work ; edition after edition, of the doctrine taught in Eden, revised and amended, bound and gilded after the latest fashion, is thrown off, caught up, and greedily devoured by such of the community as have threaded the mazes of the spelling-book, and become thereby wiser than Moses or Solomon. They scatter around them a moral pestilence, breaking forth in boils and blains more grievous and fatal than those which covered the Egyptians—issuing in death eternal. Besides,

6. The heterogeneousness of the population involves a thousand diversities of intellectual habits and social customs, as well as of religious and political opinions. From these, spring prejudices and strifes, whose inveteracy and violence, time only, in combination with evangelical instruction, can undermine and destroy. The sentiments and habitudes of early life, yield but slowly, in the most auspicious circumstances, to later influences ; and nothing short of the power from on high, operating through the truth of Revelation laid upon the conscience, can thoroughly subdue them. The Sandwich Islander may be Americanized—the enslaved African may become an independent and honored citizen—the oppressed Irishman may be transformed into an intelligent freeman—and the Russian serf may learn to appreciate the blessings of liberty ; but years must roll on, and intellectual and moral appliances must be wisely and perseveringly used before homogeneity of feeling and action will be produced between them. Bring all classes into the same daily pupilage, and under a common system of evangelical instruction—and their social customs, religious and political opinions, with the prejudices and passions nourished by them, will ultimately be melted down like mingled ores in a common crucible, and prepared for harmonious action in all that concerns the interests of Zion and the world.

Such a result demands varied labors for its accomplish-

ment, and an energy of faith, indomitable as that which coursed through the veins of the Puritan fathers two hundred years ago. The Bible must be put within the reach of all; the colporteur must explore the dormitories of ignorance and the dens of iniquity; the schoolmaster must be abroad; the Sabbath school must be sustained on the basis of a broad evangelical Catholicism; and no effort may be spared to furnish every family with the productions of the religious press. But an instrumentality high above all this, and to which all else is subsidiary, is the holy MINISTRY, ordained of heaven to command all men every where to repent,—to establish churches, administer ordinances, and supervise the auxiliary movements of the spirit of benevolence. Aside of this, every other instrumentality is as powerless to subdue and bind the man of sin, as the green withes and flaxen cords of the Philistines to conquer the son of Manoah. It is the word preached, that becomes the power of God, and the wisdom of God unto salvation. "Faith cometh by hearing;"—and, "how shall they hear without a preacher!"

7. We have a paramount duty to discharge to our country. Here are the sepulchres of our fathers. Here are our homes, and the homes of our posterity; and here must our bones rest till the dawn of the resurrection morning. Not only so, but it is the LORD'S land, committed to us, for cultivation and the ingathering of his harvest; and if the vine be dried up, and the fig tree languish; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all trees of the field wither, and the wheat and the barley of the field perish, then shall shame cover us. This work is committed to us alone. No other nation can share it. And we have abundant *means* to accomplish it. If we speak of wealth, it is here; or of laborers, they are here; or of faith and prayer and energy, they are all here. These are the Lord's TREASURES, to be freely poured forth at the call of his providence; and, whatever other channels are prepared for their outflow, Home Mis-

sions is second to none. "Go! preach my Gospel, saith the Lord;" the living voice, the speaking eye, the strong inward emotion gaining utterance through every limb and muscle of the frame, have mightier power over the spirits of men, and bring them into closer contact with the Spirit of God, than all other means combined; apart from them, indeed, all else is powerless as moon-beams on the ice of the polar circles.

8. And then—if the extremities of the earth are to be reached, and all nations are to be brought to the feet of Jesus, it must be done by the instrumentality of the fifty millions of the Anglo-Saxon race, spread over this and our fatherland. Piety and zeal certainly exist in some other portions of Christendom, but the labors and sacrifices to which they prompt, however great, cannot be commensurate with the home demand. The Anglican and American families have a special commission, clear as the sun shining in his strength, to give the knowledge of Christ to every people under heaven. To fulfil this commission, the flame of love must burn brightly on our own altars; religion pure and undefiled must be vigorously maintained in our own bosoms. None of our churches may be left to decay, nor our fields to grow over to thorns and briars; but the gospel must be proclaimed in all its richness and power throughout the land, that converts to righteousness may be multiplied, the friends of truth strengthened, and every desolate waste transformed into a garden of the Lord!

Brethren! Can you doubt what the Lord would have you to do? Your country is before you. Its wants are known to you. Its dangers are seen; its calls are heard; its destiny is yet undecided.

Would you swell the amount of its industry, wealth and beneficence? Evangelize it throughout.

Would you confirm and perpetuate its admirable civil institutions, and political privileges? Proclaim in every part of it the Gospel.

Would you give activity to mind, increase its acquisitions, and render the common school, the college and the higher seminary, nurseries of intelligence and virtue? Establish every where the authority of the Bible!

Would you refresh the hearts of thousands who are waiting for the consolation of Israel, and ready to perish through lack of the crumbs that fall from your Father's table? Send them the pastor, who will break to them the bread of life.

Would you turn back upon its source the strong current of licentiousness, and save the bulwarks of freedom and the temples of God from threatened overthrow? Make the voice of Jehovah Jesus heard—"hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther."

Would you increase the moral influence of the country on the destinies of the world, and through the ten thousand filaments connecting it with other nations create the vibrations of love and good will in all human bosoms? Then echo the glad tidings in the ear of every American from the Aroostook to Mexico, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Or,

Would you multiply your own consolations, and send your treasures before you into heaven, and secure friends who will receive you to everlasting habitations? Then devote the gracious gifts of God to your country's evangelization. Spare not. Grudge not. Labor earnestly. You have hold on the same enterprise sustained by him who commanded the Apostles to "begin at Jerusalem." Prosecute it to the end. Heaven hallows it. The world feels its impulse. And ere long, its results will blend in the completion of that temple whose top stone will be brought forth with shoutings of Grace, grace unto it.

A word more in conclusion. "Give me a place where to stand, and I will throw the world from its orbit," was the vain boast of the ancient philosopher. "Twelve men were sufficient to establish Christianity," says the so-called philosopher of modern days, "but one shall suf-

fice to overthrow it." Presumptuous boasting! Blood and carnage, desolation and war follow its utterance; but Christianity lives, escapes unharmed the flood of waters poured forth to swallow her up, and multiplies her bloodless victories. She has a place to stand, hard by the throne of God, and in her hand a lever that lifts the world. She plants her three thousand missionaries on pagan ground, and sustains other thousands amid her own waste places; she pours forth the light of truth from hundreds of presses, and gathers millions of her sons and daughters into Sabbath schools; she disperses the oracles of God by tens of millions among the rich and the poor, and scatters the leaves that are for the healing of the nations, by hundreds of millions; forswearing unchaste alliances with the principalities and powers of the world, she arrays herself calmly against war and oppression, undermines thrones of despotism, and compels tyranny to bite the dust.

Still, says the enemy in his wrath, "I will pursue, I will overtake, and divide the spoil;"—but, the wind of heaven blows, the sea returns, he sinks like lead in the mighty waters.

Oceans shall be drained, the strong foundations of the earth loosed, the sun turned into darkness and the moon into blood, and all the elements of nature thrown back into their primitive chaos, sooner than the moral kingdom of Jehovah shall be shaken. Omnipotence must be dethroned before the triumphs of Zion can be confounded. When I see the church of God borne safely in an ark of gopher-wood over floods that drown a world filled with violence, and again, wending its way on dry ground through the channels of the deep; when I see the hearts of kings turned as the rivers of water are turned, the mouths of lions stopped, the violence of fire quenched, and armies of aliens turned to flight, and then listen to the great voice out of heaven, saying, "Behold! the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with

them, and wipe away all tears from their eyes," I cannot doubt the continued triumphs of the church over the boundless craft and furious opposition of earth and hell. What persecution has she not endured in by-gone days, what tortures has she not been subjected to, at what time has she not been compelled to wade, step by step, through blood flowing from her own veins, constantly inquiring, "Lord! what wilt thou have me to do?" All this has humbled, but not conquered her. Nay, the sword and the faggot, the dungeon and the rack have proved her life. Her foundations are laid too deep, and her top-stone is reared too high to be reached by the arms of man or of fallen angels. Never have the heathen raged, nor the kings of the earth set themselves, nor the rulers taken counsel together, nor the angel of the bottomless pit sent forth his armies like scorpions, nor the great red dragon fought with Michael and his angels for the mastery over the world, when the Lord God has not spoken to them in his wrath, and vexed them in his sore displeasure, and finally broken them with a rod of iron, and dashed them in pieces as a potter's vessel. And ere long, when the trump of the seventh angel shall sound, great voices shall be heard in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever."

In the prospect of such a consummation, who rejoices not! But to hasten it in its time we have much to do. The relations and claims of our country determine the sphere of our activity. The vastness of its extent and capabilities, the peculiar character of its present and prospective population, its wide destitutions, its multiform religions, its Gorgon infidelity and blaspheming atheism, with its rampant vices, and atrocious crimes, its intimate connections with other nations, and its mighty influence for good or ill over the world, according to the spirit that pervades its bosom, through the channels of learning, commerce, and quenchless enterprise—all distinctly an-

nounce our duty to "publish salvation," and say to every city, hamlet and individual of the land, "Jehovah reigns."

Would you then, brethren, bless your country and the world? Rise to labor, and lead forth the streams of salvation, and invite every man who claims a common birthright here, to come to the waters—to come, and drink, and drink again, without money and without price. So shall our American Zion become an eternal excellency—joy shall fill her sanctuaries, glory shall cover her palaces, and her righteousness shall spring forth before all nations.

"O thou,
Whose kingdom shall extend,
Till earth like heaven, thy name shall fill,
And men like angels do thy will;
Shine on our path, in mercy shine,
Prosper our work, and make it thine."